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When You Do Not Return

When you leave your native hills
winter is merely a reminder
of all past winters, of all
the loves we lost, and there's none
to care for the old and infirm. All
the hospices have closed their doors.

Leaves no longer respond
to the alchemy of seasons,
and the heart lies fallow
expecting winter rain. Earth
has closed again like a woman
when you do not return, and dreams
turn to rust, the flame and the dew
cannot create art. Only lust breaks
on the branches of night, and men
wear hideous masks, the fragrance
of the wild rose is lost, and only
the flowers of the market are on sale.

The poet loses his metaphors
when you do not return, and he
merely repeats himself in the
dreadful arithmetic of the day.
The world knew me as happy when
you gave me your healing hand
and now ignores my grief because
you left. The murmuring river
is hushed as it loses its course
in a sunless kingdom.

When you leave your native land
messianic young men betray principles,
and there's no fire in their eyes.
In the streets students shout themselves
hoarse for newly-arrived patriots. The
right and the left have become synonymous,
and citizens garland only the thieves.
The man of god merely chants the
sanctimonious burlesque of prayers,
while the poor remain cold and naked
the preacher is warm and fed. When
you do not return dead waters breed
reptiles in our minds, gunfire reverberates
in the hills, and bullets sprout from
windows instead of geraniums. When you
do not return after the bloodthirsty purges,
flies swarm around limp flags. The barbwire
of the day encloses us as we enter the era
of the assassin.

When you leave your native hills
I can only speak of lost times,
and of sorrow and blood. And I write
these letters of winter, asking you
to return to the hills, on
grey pages I send you happiness
because it has left my home.

During Easter

Winter languishes in the street
like an old man who refuses to stir
when constellations swing ingeniously
and cherries turn red like the luminous
lips of girls eager for kisses.

The streets are only half-emptied,
not everyone has gone to witness
the resurrection of the son of god.

On Maundy Thursday no one washes
the feet of the poor
as the son of man washes
the feet of his automobile.